

A Note on the Limits of Anšan

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§1. Introduction; §2. Background; §3. A New Perspective.

1. Introduction

In a recent study dedicated to Cyrus the Great and his ancestry, I focused very literally on the much discussed testimony of the Cyrus Cylinder, according to which Cyrus and his forebears were kings of Anšan (Potts 2005: 7–28); on the Nabonidus Chronicle, which employs the same title; and on the Sennacherib prism inscriptions, which scrupulously distinguished Anšan from Parsua, Paširu, Ellipi, and others in discussing the events of 691 B.C., arguing, contrary to many other commentators, that these references were not anachronistic, that Cyrus and his forebears were in fact kings of Anšan—an Anšan that still existed in the 6th century B.C.—and that Cyrus and his Anšanite Teispid line (descendants of Teispes or Šišpiš) should be distinguished from the family of Darius, which was in truth the Achaemenid line. In the present paper, I wish only to consider one part of the equation—namely, Anšan—and what we understand by that name in the Neo-Elamite and Achaemenid periods.

2. Background

Between 1847 and 1851, Henry Creswicke Rawlinson published his groundbreaking studies of the Old Persian version of Darius the Great's Bisotun inscription, which was followed in 1855 by Edwin Norris' study of the Elamite, or "Scythic," version, as he called it, and some years later by Babylonian version published together with George Smith.¹ In DB III §40, Darius refers to "the Persian army which (was) in the palace, (having come) from Anšan previously." Although Anšan was by no stretch of the imagination a place of any importance in Darius' narrative, the Bisotun reference marked the toponym's first appearance in the scholarly literature and ushered in, albeit slowly, over a century of debate on its location.

That question, many would say, was convincingly answered in 1972 when Erica Reiner published a number of inscribed bricks that had been gathered by William Sumner on the surface of Tal-e Malyan in Fars Province and that were clearly duplicates of the text on an unprovenanced brick mentioning Anšan published by Maurice Lambert (Reiner 1973; Lambert 1972). The bricks in question dated to the reign of Hutelutuš-Inšušinak, who acceded to the throne around 1120 B.C. and built a temple to Napiriša, Kiririša, Inšušinak, and Šimut at Anšan (Potts

1. Old Persian version: Rawlinson 1847, 1850, 1851; Elamite version: Norris 1855; Babylonian version: Rawlinson and Smith 1870: pls. 39–40.

1999: 247). Nevertheless, despite these discoveries, the limits of Anšan still pose problems, particularly for students of Elam, Anšan, and Parsa in the Neo-Elamite and Achaemenid periods.

There are several reasons why this is the case. To begin with, in Royal Achaemenid Elamite, toponyms are preceded by a single horizontal wedge read AŠ as a geographical determinative, but unlike Sumerian and Akkadian sources, which distinguished between a land of Anšan, using the determinative KI, sometimes qualified as NIM, commonly used to designate Elam, or KUR, used to designate mountainous terrain, and a town or city of Anšan, designated by the determinative URU, Elamite AŠ was used for all categories of geographical names in the Persepolis texts.² Therefore, only context can tell us whether a toponym refers to a city or a country. This very point was raised by W. M. Sumner (1986: 11) when he wrote, apropos the references to Cyrus' forebears as kings of Anšan, "it is not clear that the name refers to a city or settlement rather than to the land over which the kings ruled."

The dichotomy emphasized 25 years ago by François Vallat (1980) between lowland Šušān and highland Anšan has, moreover, led to a general tendency to equate Anšan very broadly with the mountainous districts of Fars, a view anticipated in a 1972 map by John Hansman that identified Anšan as an area far surpassing the environs of Tal-e Malyān (Hansman 1972: fig. 1). Indeed, some scholars might wish to call everything in the highlands where written Elamite is attested "Anšan," limited perhaps only by present knowledge of the maximum areal extent of Elamite usage in antiquity, which, so far as our knowledge goes at the moment, extends from Susa, Kalmakarrēh, and Bisotūn in the west, eastward to Tul-e Afghāni in the Bakhtiyari mountains, where an inscription of Hutelutūš-Inšūšinak was found several years ago, south to Persepolis, and southwest to Tul-e Peytul, ancient Liyan, on the Persian Gulf.³

Such speculation on the extent of Anšan is, however, nothing new. In 1851, the year in which the second installment of Rawlinson's Bisotūn publication appeared, Austen Henry Layard published his autograph copies of the Elamite inscriptions at Kul-e Farah and Eškāft-e Salman (Layard 1851: pls. 31–32, 36–37). These were subsequently analyzed in detail by Jules Oppert (1873) and A. H. Sayce. Sayce's studies show clearly that he mistakenly read the toponym Anzan in Layard's copies. This led him to describe Anšan's location as "that part of Elam which bordered upon the Persian Gulf; but the dynasty which established itself in Susa caused it to become the common name of the whole country."⁴ Sayce's reference to the Persian Gulf was based on the discovery in 1857 of inscribed Elamite bricks at Bushehr, bricks that were brought to light during trenching by British troops in the Anglo-Persian War.⁵ Even though

2. On the use of geographical determinatives in Elamite of other periods, see Steve 1992: 17.

3. Personal communication, Mr. Norouzi, Iranian Cultural Heritage and Tourism Organization, Shahr-e Kord, for Tul-e Afghāni in the Bakhtiyari mountains.

4. Sayce 1874: 475. Cf. Sayce 1884: 637–756.

5. For one of the earliest references to their discovery, see Rawlinson 1857: 281, "the very point where the British troops first came into collision with the Persians—a place which will ever be remembered as the scene of a great victory of our troops, and where so many gallant officers fell—that spot happens to be the most important in point of antiquarian and historical interest of any place in the whole Persian Gulf. . . . The remains of a city are still to be seen there; and from its ruins I produce here an actual fragment, a brick from the Temple of Tirhakeh, the great king of Æthiopia, who was contemporary with Sennacherib. There are many specimens of the same class in the British Museum. . . . it must have been a place of much importance, for numbers of bricks, impressed with cuneiform legends, have been dug up in the immediate vicinity. . . . Upon these bricks are found the legends of *Sutur Nakhunta*, contemporary with Sargon of Assyria, and *Kudur Nakhunta* and *Tirhakeh*, contemporary with Sennacherib." Cf. the discussion in Simpson 2007.

most of these were not properly published until Weissbach's analyses appeared almost 40 years later, Rawlinson had already noted their content, and it is possible that Sayce had seen the specimens in the British Museum as well.⁶ As Sayce (1884: 641) explained more fully several years later: "Since Susian inscriptions have been found near Bushire on the Persian Gulf in which the royal scribes give themselves the title of 'kings of Anzan', it is clear that the country of Anzan of which Susa was the capital must have extended as far as the sea."

The 1870 publication of Rawlinson and Norris, *The Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia I*, included the first published copies of the so-called Taylor prism, one of the main sources for Sennacherib's campaigns.⁷ Specifically, it contained a reference to Umman-menanu or Humban-nimena III, who was called "king of Elam" and of whom it is said that he "gathered to himself a large body of confederates—the men of Parsua, Anzan, Paširu, Ellipi, the whole of Chaldaea and all the Aramaeans," prior to the battle of Halule in 691 B.C. But it was the publication of the Cyrus Cylinder, discovered in 1879 by Hormuzd Rassam at Babylon, in which Cyrus and his ancestors Kambuzia, Kuraš, and Šišpiš are each called "king of Anšan," LUGAL ŠAR URU Anšan (l. 12, cf. l. 21; Berger 1975: 197), followed by the Nabonidus Cylinder, recounting Cyrus' conquest of Babylon, which provided the most important new data. As Sayce (1882: 551) wrote in 1882, in one of a series of papers prompted by the newly available information contained in the Cyrus cylinder (in my translation from his original French):

The geographical position of Anzan is perfectly explained by the inscriptions of the ancient kings of Susiana, who styled themselves . . . "king of the Susians, powerful sovereign of Anzan, the Susian" [obviously a somewhat tortuous and misleading translation of the common Elamite title "king of Susa and Anšan"]. As their remains have been found to the south as far as Bender Bushir [again an allusion to the texts recovered during the British war against Iran], it would seem that the kingdom of Anzan extended from Dizful to the Persian Gulf.

A year later, Sayce (1884: 641–42) wrote:

It was of Anzan . . . that Kyros and his predecessors were kings before his conquest of Media, according to the newly-discovered inscriptions of the founder of the so-called Persian Empire. Teispes had established himself in Anzan or Elam, which the overthrow of Assyria had left exposed to the first comer, and it was of Anzan and not of Persia that Kyros was primarily king. Hence it is that Isaiah (XXI.2) declares that the invaders of Babylonia are Elam and Media, Elam being the Semitic equivalent of Anzan.

Further on, Sayce (1884: 643) refers again to "Anzan, the older and proper title of Susiana." Sayce's views about the location of Anšan were swiftly attacked by the Belgian Jesuit scholar A. J. Delattre (1883: 53), who pointed out that Elam and Anšan were not simply synonyms, as Sayce had claimed, because the names were scrupulously distinguished in Sennacherib's annals. Nevertheless, the opinion that he expressed is not dissimilar to the much later views of scholars who have understood Anšan as denoting a great swathe through the highlands of western Fars.

6. Weissbach 1891: 119–50; 1894: 739–42. Their existence prior to publication was widely known. See, e.g., Billerbeck 1893: 16.

7. For full references, see now Frahm 1997: 102–3.



Figure 1. Landsat photograph of the Mamasani district showing the location of Tol-e Nurabad, Tol-e Kushkak, Tol-e Spid, Kurangun, Tol-e Kulneh, and Mirza Mohammadi.

3. A New Perspective

These attempts to locate Anšan, of course, involved no fieldwork. Although he was preceded in his exploration of the area between Khuzestan and Persepolis by Kinneir, de Bode, and Andreas and Stolze, Herzfeld was the first scholar to propose a location for Anšan based on more than armchair research. On April 8, 1924, Herzfeld (1926: 258) left Bishapur and arrived in the Mamasani district of western Fars. He was struck by the archaeological richness of this area, noting that it exceeded all his expectations. Among the pre-Islamic monuments in Mamasani, Herzfeld noted in particular the relief of Bahram II, enthroned and accompanied by the great *mobed* Kartir and his vizir Papak, at Sarab-e Bahram; the Sasanian tower of Dum-e Mil or Mil-e Azhdaha, the cut-stone masonry of which he correctly compared with that of Narseh's ruined tower at Paikuli, the Achaemenid site of Jinjun or Tepe Survan, thought by most scholars to represent the remains of a way-station along the Royal Road linking Persepolis

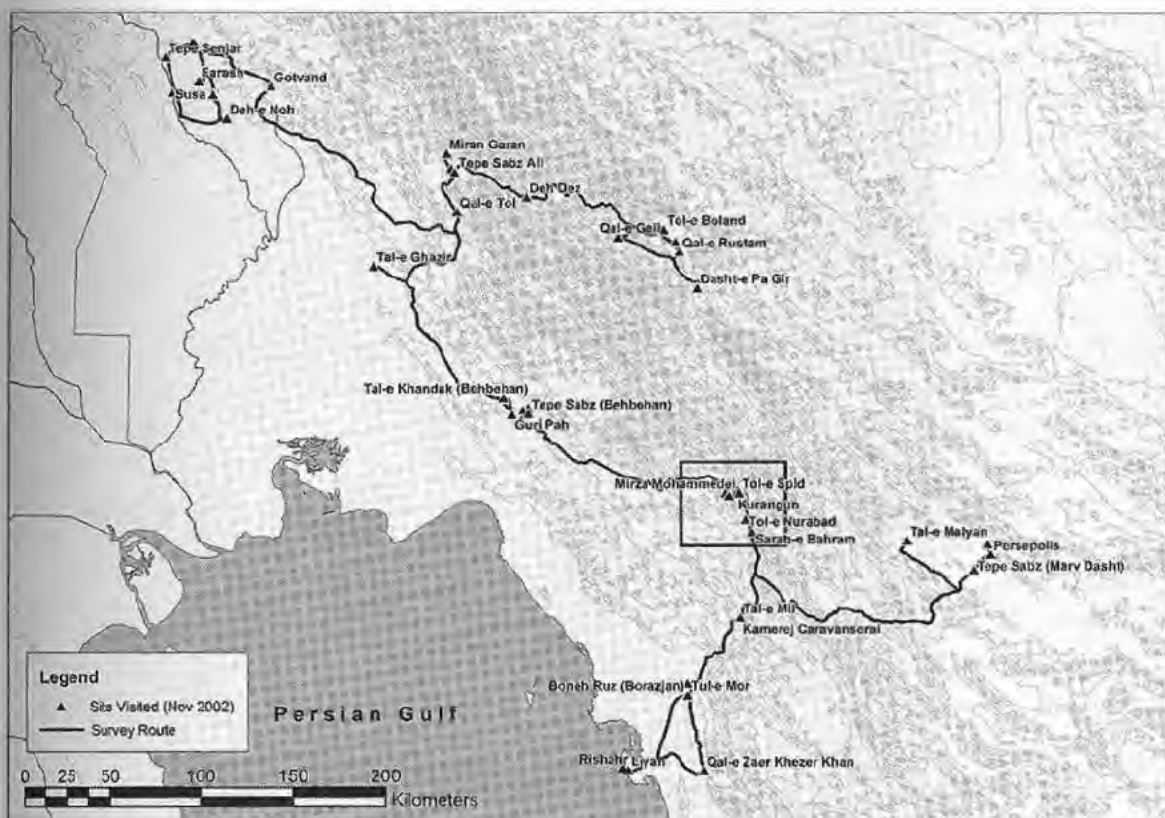


Figure 2. 2002 survey map of southwestern Iran.

and Susa; the mound of Tul-e Spid, at which an inscribed Elamite brick had been found with a dedication to the Elamite goddess Kilahšupir by Šilhak-Inšušinak (Herzfeld 1928: 81–86); the Elamite rock relief at Kurangun; and finally the rock-cut tomb of Da-u Dukhtar at Khak-e Rustam (fig. 3).

Herzfeld believed that Da-u Dukhtar was pre-Achaemenid, a link, as he put it, between the “Median” graves and those of Naqsh-e Rostam and Persepolis. Herzfeld (1926: 259) wrote (and I translate from the German), “It must probably belong to one of the forebears of Cyrus, to a king of Anšan [i.e., those mentioned in the Cyrus Cylinder] and it is historically and topographically of as great importance as it is architecturally; for it contributes to answering the question of the unknown land Anšan.” Although later scholars, in particular David Stronach (1978: 304), have convincingly argued that Da-u Dukhtar is post-Achaemenid, rather than pre-Achaemenid, and should rather be linked to the kings of the *frataraka* dynasty of Persis, this in no way diminishes the interest of Herzfeld’s observations for the history of scholarship on the location of Anšan that, in many ways dovetail perfectly with what Sayce was thinking, if for the wrong reasons.

Since 2002, the Mamasani district has been the scene of survey and excavation by a joint team from the University of Sydney and the Iranian Cultural Heritage and Tourism Organization, excavating at both Tol-e Nurabad and Tol-e Spid and surveying in the Rustam 1 and 2 plains (figs. 1–2).⁸ The stratigraphic soundings at both sites, and indeed the results of survey in

8. Askari et al. 2010; Potts 2009; Potts et al. 2007; Potts et al. 2009; Potts and Roustaei 2006.

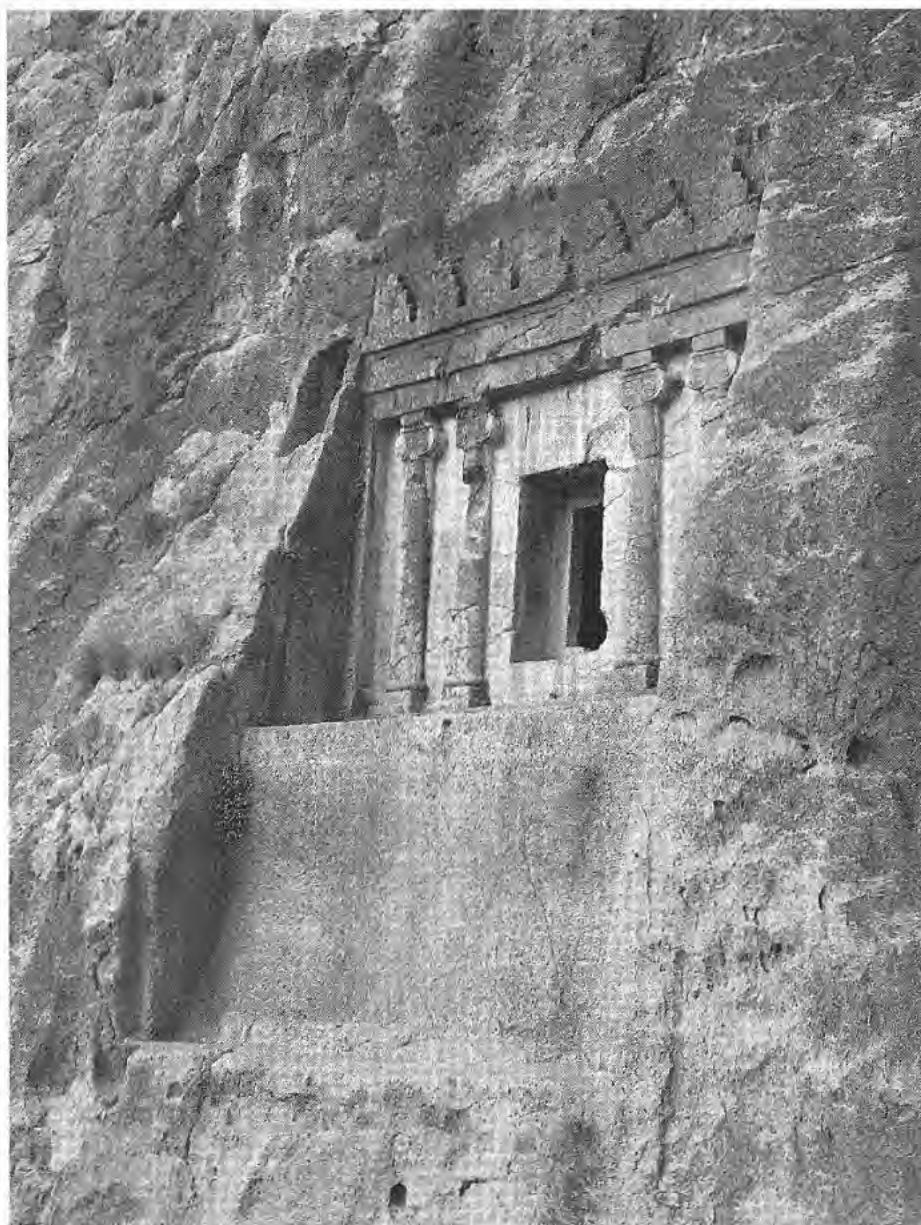


Figure 3. View of the rock-cut tomb of Da-u Dukhtar.

the Rustam 1 and 2 plains and surrounding study area that extends from Pol-e Pirin, the gateway to Khuzestan, in the west, to Pol-e Mord, the mountain pass leading eastward to Tal-e Malyan in the east, brought to light very little evidence of occupation between the Middle Elamite and the Achaemenid period. Comparable coverage is not available for all parts of Fars, e.g., around Fasa and Darab, Yasuj, Firuzabad, Kazerun, and many other areas. Yet the absence of material dating to the Neo-Elamite period suggests that the Mamasani region, and possibly most of those just mentioned, should not be considered part of Anšan in the 1st millennium B.C.

Rather, if we look at the Persepolis Fortification texts (Table 1), there are a handful of references to Anšan, all of which seem to be to a specific place, rather than to a land more generally. Moreover, considering the fact that some of the officials involved in these transactions—including Umanna in PF 1, Tiya and Iršena in PF 1112, and Šada in PF 1780—are also mentioned in texts concerning transactions in or close to Persepolis, it seems highly plausible

that these references concern a specific Anšan on the Marv Dasht plain, the same place attested since the reign of the Old Akkadian king Maništušu, and not to a large, amorphous swathe of highland Fars. In effect, therefore, the Persepolis Fortification texts, combined with an absence of Neo-Elamite material from much of Fars, provide a clear answer to W. M. Sumner's query, quoted above. In response to the skepticism expressed by the statement that "it is not clear that the name refers to a city or settlement rather than to the land over which the kings [of Anšan] ruled" (Sumner 1986: 11), I would suggest that it is in fact very clear. The references are to the town of Anšan, not to the land of Anšan.

Yet notwithstanding the fact that Anšan rated a passing mention in the Bisotun inscription, Anšan by this time was no longer a center of power. Why should this have been the case? If I am correct in thinking that Cyrus and his Teispid line came from Anšan, then it is hardly surprising that the town would not have been favored under the new regime of Darius, a conclusion implied by the scanty references to Anšan in the Persepolis archive. Anšan in the Achaemenid period was no longer a city with an important hinterland. It had been the home of Cyrus and his forebears and it continued to exist in the reign of Darius, as the mundane references to it in the Persepolis archive attest. But Darius, whose rise put an end to the pretensions of the Teispid line, could have had no interest in seeing Anšan flourish as an economic center, even a regional market town. What changes may have occurred in the lives of its inhabitants after their favorite son Cyrus swept to power we cannot say. That its influence was severely curtailed under Darius and his successors seems extremely likely, and although occupation in the Parthian, Sasanian, and Islamic periods confirms that the site was not completely abandoned, Anšan was no longer a seat of kings. The limits of Anšan must have been obvious to all after the death of Cambyses and the ascendancy of Darius.

Table 1. Reference to Anšan in the Persepolis Tablets

Text	Reference	Year
PF 1	Two quantities of grain taken to Anšan for distribution	Undated
PF 1112	Receipt for wine given to 24 workers receiving rations at Anšan over a 6 month period	22 (500/499 B.C.)
PF 1780	Wine ration for horses of Šada, traveling from Anšan to Elam	Undated
PF-NN 0218	Horses sent to Anšan (ref. W. Henkelman)	
PF-NN 0420	Horses sent to Anšan (ref. W. Henkelman)	
PF-NN 1803	Horses sent from Susa to Anšan (ref. W. Henkelman)	

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